

Head Start Approach to School Readiness

Overview

The Head Start Approach to School Readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children’s learning, and schools are ready for children. Historically, Head Start often has led the early childhood field with a strong, clear, and comprehensive focus on all aspects of healthy development, including physical, cognitive, social and emotional development, all of which are essential to children getting ready for school. All agencies are required to establish school readiness goals which are defined as “the expectations of children’s status and progress across domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical health and well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development that will improve readiness for kindergarten goals” and that “appropriately reflect the ages of children, birth to five, participating in the program” (45 CFR Chapter XIII Head Start Regulation Part 1307.2 and 1307.3 (b)(1)(i), as amended). Head Start views school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life.

For parents and families, school readiness means they are engaged in the long-term, lifelong success of their child. Head Start recognizes that parents are their children’s primary teachers and advocates. Programs are required to consult with parents in establishing school readiness goals (45 CFR 1307.3 (b) (1) (iii), as amended). As Head Start programs and schools work together to promote school readiness and to engage families as their children make the transition to kindergarten, schools will be ready for children.

The Head Start Approach to School Readiness encompasses three major frameworks that promote an understanding of school readiness for parents and families, infants/toddlers, and preschoolers. The three frameworks and their accompanying graphics provide the foundation for implementing systemic and integrated comprehensive child development services and family engagement efforts that lead to school readiness for young children and families.

